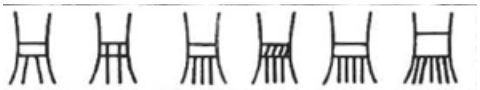
Worship of the four directions (Loka-palakas) in Egypt and ancient Tamil Nadu.

There is a strange symbol with four legs in IVC as well as in Tamil Nadu pottery graffiti. This symbol has long puzzled me, and I have finally found an answer. This answer came from TN graffiti, not from IVC symbols. Please note that TN graffiti is associated with funeral graffiti, whereas IVC archaeologists live in an imaginary world of metropolises like Mohenjo Daro and Harappa.

This illusion is the reason the Indus script has remained undeciphered for the past century. The second point is the relevance of context. Any archaeological object should be associated with the location of its discovery. Those excavators found those seals in the cemetery but refused to accept them as a cemetery. That is the reason for a wide range of interpretations over the century. This fundamental flaw has to be rectified. Only then will there be a breakthrough in deciphering the Indus script.

At this juncture, it is relevant to introduce the cone symbol. The cone symbol indicates the mountain on which heaven is perched. The table-like structure at the top has four legs. Read the article “The Cone Ladder Combination Indicates the Pathway to Heaven” for more information. (1). This four-legged symbol is associated with the tabletop heaven located at the summit of the mountain. This four-legged symbol represents the four directions that support the iron plate at the top, symbolising heaven.

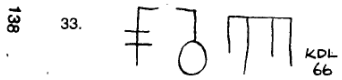


The above-given symbols are variants from the book of Iravatham Mahadevan. (2) All these symbols could indicate the four-legged heaven. Earlier, I had suggested that it could be the chair of the god of death. This idea had to be revisited and reconsidered. The pot graffiti symbols from Tamil Nadu further clarify this idea.

This H – symbol needs extra attention. Earlier, I had explained that it was the symbol of Marduk, thereby, a weapon of Indra. Now, that idea had to be revised. The H- symbol indicates the four cardinal directions that protect the dead body.

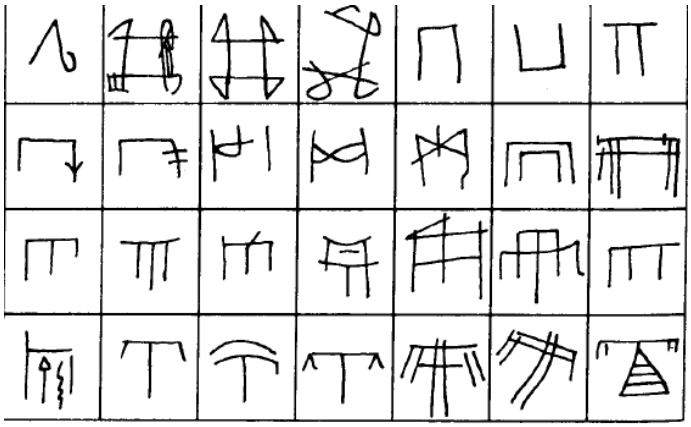
Consider these three symbols. There are more than four legs to this symbol. It indicates something other than a chair; the chair has only four legs, but directions

could be more than four. For example, the direction is sometimes divided into eight segments. So, the possibility of this symbol being in four directions is more likely.



Now, consider the pot graffiti from Kodumanal, Tamil Nadu. The four-legged symbol represents the concept of the four directions and heaven; the intention behind the graffiti is that the dead man has risen to heaven. This reference is from the book of Gurumurthy, page no. 138.

The first two symbols are from later-day Tamizhi script letters, indicating the word "Kavu," which means sacrifice. The conclusion is that a sacrifice has been made to help the dead man reach heaven. One important point to note here is that both Tamizhi and Indus symbols are written in a mixed manner.



All these variants could indicate heaven. This extract is from the book by Gurumurthy, page number 270. One important point to remember is that the number of pot graffiti symbols in Tamil Nadu is minimal. The main ideas to be conveyed by the priest are that of heaven, a ladder to climb to heaven, and sacrifice to aid the climbing process. Hence, the number of symbols used is minimal.

The idea of four directions from Egypt

In ancient Egyptian religion, the concept of four-directional gods, primarily represented by the Four Sons of Horus, was prominent, with each deity associated with a cardinal direction and a specific organ to protect. These deities were often depicted on canopic jars or the sides of coffins. (3)

Egyptologists suggest that the sons of Horus were associated with the four cardinal points of the Egyptian cosmos. Their orientation may be related to the positions of each organ: the lungs and liver sit higher in the body, thus fitting the northerly position of Imsety and Hapi, while the stomach and intestines are lower down, matching the southerly position of Duamutef and Qebehsenuef. (4)

In other cases, each of the sons of Horus appeared on a side wall of the coffin or canopic chest: Imsety in the south, Hapi in the north, Duamutef in the east, and

Qebehsenuef in the west. The latter placement, with the sons of Horus on four sides rather than four corners, links the four deities with the cardinal directions rather than the corners of the cosmos. The coexistence of the two systems of orientation suggests that the Egyptians did not sharply distinguish the four corners from the four directions. (4)

The above extract from the paper of Raven Maarten (2005) (4) The article provides an explanation of the four directions and the four gods who protect the dead body. Those gods were protectors of the four cardinal directions of the cosmos, simultaneously serving as the four pillars of heaven. In conclusion, the four legs of heaven indicate the four gods of heaven who protect the deceased.

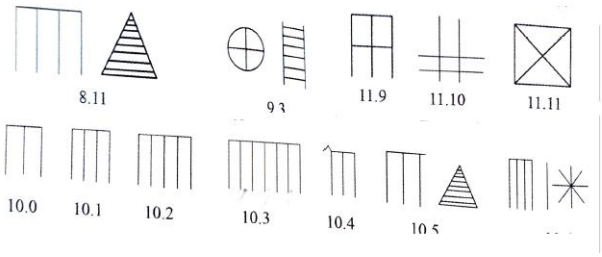


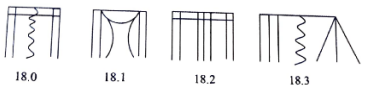
Figure 1Variants of four directions. Figure courtesy Rajan. (5)

The figure above shows the variants of four directions from the book by Rajan. (5)

Page no 126, Pot graffiti symbols from Kodumanal. (5) Note that the number of lines varies from three to four and even seven, yet all these symbols represent the four directional gods of Egypt. The seven lines may be the corrupted form of the eight directions. Note the symbolism in reference 8.1; the four directions are associated with the cone symbol, which indicates the idea of climbing to heaven. The gods of the four directions protect the soul as it ascends to heaven.

Note the target symbol, which is associated with the ladder symbol " ", indicating that the dead person's soul is in the process of climbing to heaven through the ladder, and the target is either heaven or the four gods of four directions. Whatever the ultimate goal of the priest may be, it is to convey the idea of reaching heaven with the protection of the four gods of direction.

Note this symbol, a square with cross lines. This symbol could also indicate the heavens or the gods of the four directions.



This figure is again from Rajan's book, page 127. These pot graffiti symbols are from Kodumanal, which again indicate the process of the soul climbing to heaven. The table-like symbol with four legs is either four gods or the four legs of heaven. Either way, it means the same. The river-like symbol (Water symbol) may not be a literal river, as I mentioned in an earlier article; it may instead indicate the process of the soul ascending to heaven.

Four cardinal directions from Vedic civilisation

The above-mentioned four gods of Egypt were transformed into four Vedic gods in the later-day Vedic period. The Tamil Nadu graffiti marks likely indicate the four Egyptian gods rather than the Vedic gods. Because the influence of Vedic gods is meagre in Tamil Nadu graffiti. One remarkable aspect is that the IVC inscriptions incorporate both Egyptian and Vedic symbols. On the other hand, in the pot graffiti of Tamil Nadu, Vedic ritual symbols such as yajna and kedaga (shield) are absent. That shows the minimal influence of Vedic culture in South India for a long time.

In Vedic cosmology, the four cardinal direction guardians, also known as Lokapalas, are Indra (East), Yama (South), Kubera (North), and Varuna (West). Indra is associated with the eastern direction; Indra is the god of rain, thunder, and storms and is the leader of the gods (devas). He is often depicted riding a white elephant and wielding a vajra, a symbol of lightning. (6)

Yama is the god of death and the underworld, representing the southern direction. He is considered the first mortal to die and became the ruler of the underworld. Kubera is the god of wealth and prosperity, associated with the northern direction. Varuna is the god of the seas, oceans, and rain, representing the western direction. (3)

References

1. **Jeyakumar(Cone-ladder).** The cone ladder combination indicates the pathway to heaven. [Online] 2025. https://www.academia.edu/127743360/The_cone_ladder_combination_indicates_the_pathway_to_heaven.

2. **Mahadevan. I.** The Indus Script: Text, Concordance, and Tables. *http://www.rmrl.in.* [Online] http://www.rmrl.in/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/papers/5a.pdf.

3. **wikipedia(four-directions).** Four sons of Horus. [Online]

4. *Egyptian concept on orientation of the human body.* **Raven, Maarten.** s.l. : The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology. 91: 37–53., Raven, Maarten (2005). "Egyptian Concepts on the Orientation of the Human Body". The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology. 91: 37–53. 2005.

5. **Rajan., K.** *Thonmai Tamizh Iyal (in Tamil).* Chennai: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 2018.

6. **Wikipedia(Lokapala).** Lokapala. [Online] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lokapala#:~:text=The%20four%20principal%20guardians%20are:%20*%20Kubera,(South)%20*%20Indra%20(East)%20*%20Varu%E1%B9%87a%20(West).